

## **Prebaptismal Rites for Infants.**

### **Fr. Alkiviades Calivas**

The Orthodox Church has three rites for infants which are closely linked to baptism. The first rite is for the mother and child on the first day of birth. In this rite the Church expresses her thanksgiving for the safe delivery of the mother and her joy at the appearance of a new life.

#### **FIRST DAY**

Blessing the newborn infant the Church anticipates its new and second birth through water and the Spirit (John 3:5).

#### **EIGHTH DAY**

A second rite is conducted on the eighth day after birth, when the new born child receives its name from its parents. The child is given a Christian name as a sign of its new identity with the faith community.

#### **FORTIETH DAY**

The third rite is conducted on the fortieth day after birth. The new-born child is to be brought to the Church in imitation of the New Testament event, when Mary, the Theotokos, brought the infant Christ into the Temple to fulfill the requirements of the Law. On this day the mother is blessed and the infant "churches," or is accepted as a peripheral member of the Church, until it is fully incorporated into her life through baptism.

The Forty Day Blessing essentially consists of prayers of joyful thanks for the safe delivery of mother and child. The service blesses the mother who has been absent from the sacramental life of the Church for forty days and formally presents the newborn child to the Church family for the first time as the priest formally brings the infant into the Sanctuary. These pre baptismal rites are important traditions for parents to uphold. Parents must call the Church office at least one full week in advance to schedule the Forty Day Blessing service. If you wish to have Fr. Elias come by the hospital or your home for the 1<sup>st</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> day blessings for your baby please contact the church office.